

Public Comment to BPE, EDIC, and BOE November 17-19, 2021  
Kirk J. Miller, EdD on behalf of MT-PEC

Good afternoon BPE or EDIC or BOE members,

For the record, I am Kirk Miller, 40-year Montana Educator serving six Montana school communities, father & grandfather of Montana public school children, past member of the Montana Board of Public Education serving for 3 governors, and current Executive Director of SAM, and today representing the MT-PEC (MASBO, MFPE, MQEC, MREA, MTSBA, SAM).

About two months ago I provided public comment at your meeting, pointing out the challenges that have been imposed on the schools in our communities due to the polarization regarding the pandemic; and made a request for our local communities and the education leaders in our state (those of you in this gathering) to rise up to protect the ability of our public schools to serve every community across our state with high quality, responsive services for our children.

Two months after meeting with you, I can tell you that we have done our part to promote the value our public schools bring to their communities; We have focused on four essential truths ...

- Our community schools are safe, healthy centers for our children to engage their academic, social, emotional and brain health education.
- Our community schools are major drivers of the economic viability of our communities. In most communities across the state our public schools are one of the largest if not the largest employer. The employment of our neighbors who serve as educators, support staff, bus drivers, school food service, paraprofessionals, custodians are all working together to meet the educational needs of the children in our communities. The collective economic impact of the school and all of those who work in the school is significant for the economic health of every community across our state.
- Our community schools are the heart of our communities – the place where our towns gather, socialize, and work together to create a wonderful Montana life for our children and ourselves.
- Our community schools and pride for the community is fostered when all Montanans engage to support our children and their growth and development through supporting their successes in academics, the arts, activities, and athletics in every community across the state.

The [Great Work of Montana's Public Schools 2021, Vol IX](#) (MT-PEC collaboration) was released on October 21 with the four components of the strategy and the data showing strong support for our public schools among Montana voters. This statewide information about the Great work happening in our public schools can be used by each school/district/community to help tell the local story of the value our schools bring to the community. Thank you to all who have been involved in this positive approach.